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Prevention of an arms race in outer space

Letter dated 23 April 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the text of a statement of 19 April 1999 by an official representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on the preparation in the United States of America of amendments to the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 75 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) S. **Lavrov**

* A/54/50.

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Annex

Statement of 19 April 1999 by an official representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

Despite the repeated assertions by the United States of America that it supports the 1972 Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems and wishes to make it more effective, the United States is deliberately continuing to prepare amendments to the Treaty with a view to giving the appearance of legality to the deployment — under the guise of a national anti-ballistic missile defence — of an anti-ballistic missile system for a defence of the territory of the country, which is unquestionably prohibited by the relevant provisions of that instrument. Particularly disturbing are Washington's attempts to present the matter, *inter alia* in the mechanisms whose task it is to ensure strict implementation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, as if the issue of these amendments was already resolved and all that remains is for the Parties to agree on their format.

In this connection we should like to emphasize once again that the Russian Federation will not participate, either actively or by remaining silent, in the discussion of amendments of this kind. The incorporation in the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of any amendments permitting the deployment of any form of anti-missile system for a defence of the territory of a country would be a violation of the central prohibition embodied in that Treaty, and hence would mean the de facto annulment of the Treaty itself, with all the negative consequences that would ensue therefrom — collapse of the entire structure of international treaties and agreements in the arms control field, undermining of the regime for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and others.